

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama Announces More Humanitarian Aid for Libya

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says the United States and other countries will stand with the people of Libya as they continue to face violent attacks from forces loyal to Muammar Qadhafi, and he announced additional U.S. humanitarian assistance to support international aid organizations in Libya.

"I want to send a very clear message to those who are around Colonel Qadhafi. It is their choice to make how they operate moving forward, and they will be held accountable for whatever violence continues to take place there," Obama said March 7 after meeting with Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard in Washington.

The United States and Australia support democracy and human rights around the world, he said, and will stand with the Libyan people "in the face of unwarranted violence and the continuing suppression of democratic ideals that we've seen there."

The president said he has authorized an additional \$15 million for aid organizations in Libya, bringing total U.S. assistance to \$30 million. According to a March 7 memorandum from Obama to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, the assistance comes from the U.S. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund and will be used to meet "unexpected and urgent refugee and migration needs," including contributions to international, governmental and nongovernmental organizations and to pay administrative expenses incurred by the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) related to the humanitarian crisis.

Prior to the president's announcement of the additional aid, PRM had contributed \$5 million to the International Organization for Migration's efforts to evacuate and assist refugees in Libya, and the U.S. Agency for International Development had pledged \$10 million to help victims of the violence.

"We've been coordinating with the United Nations, which now has a number of personnel on the ground as well, to make sure that people are getting the help they need, and we are in a position to respond to any additional emergencies that may arise," Obama said.

The president also said the 28 members of NATO have been discussing "a wide range of potential options, including potential military options" to respond to the violence inside Libya.

SUPPORTING HUMANITARIAN RELIEF EFFORTS

U.S. Ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder said March 7 that the alliance has met at its headquarters in Brussels to discuss how it can support international humanitarian relief efforts, including evacuating people from Libya.

He also said NATO has agreed to increase surveillance operations by its airborne-radar aircraft from 10 to 24 hours a day "to have a better picture of what's really going on."

NATO is reviewing proposals on how it could enforce an arms embargo imposed by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970 on February 26, and how to establish a no-fly zone over Libya. But Daalder said the "real focus for now is on ... what kind of capabilities does NATO have that are uniquely useful to support the international effort on humanitarian relief."

NATO can set up a command-and-control capability to help coordinate humanitarian aid, Daalder said. There are NATO ships and aircraft in the region that can be used to bring relief supplies into the country, as well as for evacuation.

"There really isn't a sense that we need to get involved into the internal politics of Libya at this point in order to provide the kind of humanitarian relief that we're seeking," he said.

Defense ministers from NATO member states plan to meet in Brussels on March 10, and will devote the first of four sessions that day to the situation in Libya, Daalder said.

NATO has yet to finalize its planning on a no-fly zone or even discuss the issue in depth, including what its purpose would be, he said. "Our sense is that a no-fly zone is one possibility, but when you really look at what's going on, we have actually seen a decrease in both fighter and overall air activity" over the past two days, Daalder said.

So far, air activity "has not been the deciding factor" in what is happening on the ground in Libya, and no-fly zones would have only a limited effect against helicopters. Even if a no-fly zone were to be established, "it isn't really going to impact what is happening there today," he said. "That doesn't mean we shouldn't look at it, and we are, and we will, but it is not going to be the solution to every problem."

Daalder said NATO is considering its options "so that everybody knows what is involved and, frankly, who would be doing what and where and how." He also said that every member state would want to see a U.N.

Security Council resolution passed to establish a no-fly zone.

Secretary Clinton Launches First Exchange Initiative Aimed at Women Leaders

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has launched an initiative aimed at using international exchanges to nurture women in leadership positions around the world.

“Women’s Leadership: The Next Hundred Years” is sponsored by the U.S. State Department and is bringing 100 women leaders from 92 countries to the United States this year to explore women’s political, economic and civic leadership.

The “100 Women Initiative” builds on Clinton’s vision of “smart power,” which embraces the use of a full range of diplomatic tools — in this case international exchanges — to bring people together and foster greater understanding among people and cultures.

Clinton met with the women leaders at the State Department on the initiative’s launch on March 7. She lauded the participants for their fearless pioneering spirit as well as for their compassion. She said empowering women is a vital tool in ending poverty and alleviating hunger.

In a prepared statement, Clinton said the United States continues to make women a cornerstone of its foreign policy.

“It’s not just the right thing to do. It’s the smart thing,” Clinton said. “Women and girls drive our economies. They build peace and prosperity. Investing in them means investing in global economic progress, political stability, and greater prosperity for everyone — the world over.”

The women’s leadership participants, who represent government, civil society, business, media and academia, will travel to 15 cities in the United States from March 7 to March 25. They will have opportunities to share insights with their U.S. counterparts and with each other.

The cities are: Bozeman, Montana; Chicago, Illinois; Des Moines, Iowa; Indianapolis, Indiana; Kansas City, Missouri; Louisville, Kentucky; Manchester, New Hampshire; Minneapolis, Minnesota; New Orleans, Louisiana; New York, New York; Raleigh, North Carolina; Sacramento, California; San Francisco, California; Tampa, Florida; and Washington.

Among the many events planned for them: meetings with

representatives of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and with representatives of the White House Project, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to advance women in business, politics, media and many other sectors.

The initiative is part of the International Visitor Leadership Program of the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which each year brings thousands of participants from around the world to the United States to meet with their professional counterparts. U.S. embassy officials overseas nominate the visitors. More than 320 current and former top-ranking government officials and distinguished leaders from the private sector have participated in the program, which this year marks its 70th anniversary.

The launch of the 100 Women Initiative also helps mark the 100th anniversary of the first International Women’s Day on March 8.

Although women have made progress in their efforts to participate in society on an equal footing with men, much more needs to be done for women to achieve true parity. According to statistics compiled by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), women comprise some 64 percent of the 774 million adults who lack basic literacy skills. An estimated 529,000 women die each year from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth; and studies estimate that 20 percent to 50 percent of women worldwide suffer violence at the hands of a partner at some point in their lives, USAID says.

Clinton said the 100th anniversary of the first International Women’s Day is personally important to her. “At the 1995 Beijing conference [on women], I was so humbled by the positive response to my message that human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights,” she said. “But 16 years later, women still bear the brunt of poverty, war, disease and famine. And when it comes to the boardroom meetings, government sessions, peace negotiations and other assemblies where crucial decisions are made in the world, women are too often absent.”

“It is clear that more work needs to be done — to consolidate our gains and to keep momentum moving forward,” she said.

Looking Back: The Alliance for Progress and Its Legacy

By Lauren Monsen
Staff Writer

Washington — When President John F. Kennedy launched an ambitious foreign aid program for Latin America known as the Alliance for Progress, he proposed

it as a 10-year plan to help “build a hemisphere where all men can hope for a suitable standard of living and all can live out their lives in dignity and freedom.”

Introduced in 1961, the initiative called for broad social and economic reforms — including more equitable tax policy, income distribution and land reform — aimed at producing accelerated development and more just societies across the Western Hemisphere. Kennedy placed a high priority on U.S. engagement with Latin America, recognizing that the region’s struggles with poverty and illiteracy could place democratic institutions at risk. Also, with the Cold War at its height, Kennedy was determined to limit the regional influence of Cuba’s communist regime.

The alliance is perhaps largely forgotten now, but it marked a fresh approach to U.S.-Latin American relations, said Arturo Valenzuela, assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs. “The Alliance for Progress was a signature effort by President Kennedy to strengthen the common bonds between the United States and Latin America by addressing universal aspirations to rise above the challenges of poverty and autocracy that faced the region in the 1960s,” Valenzuela recalled.

According to Jeffrey F. Taffet, an associate professor of history at the United States Merchant Marine Academy and author of *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America*, “there was a perception of [U.S.] condescension” throughout the hemisphere, “which Kennedy was trying to change.” Kennedy wanted to establish a U.S. partnership with Latin America that carried no hint of paternalism or exploitation, said Taffet, “and Latin Americans took him seriously because they sensed that he really meant it.”

In his January 1961 inaugural address, Kennedy pledged to “our sister republics ... to convert our good words into good deeds in a new alliance for progress — to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty.” He formally announced the Alliance for Progress at a White House reception for the Latin American diplomatic corps on March 13, 1961.

“Throughout Latin America, a continent rich in resources and in the spiritual and cultural achievements of its people, millions of men and women suffer the daily degradations of poverty and hunger,” Kennedy told the region’s ambassadors. “If we are to meet a problem so staggering in its dimensions, our approach must itself be equally bold.”

Kennedy outlined a plan requiring “a vast cooperative effort, unparalleled in magnitude and nobility of purpose, to satisfy the basic needs of the American people for homes, work and land, health and schools — techo,

trabajo y tierra, salud y escuela.” The United States pledged \$20 billion in assistance and called on Latin American governments to provide \$80 billion in investment funds for their economies. At the time, it was the biggest U.S. aid program created for the developing world.

The program took flight in August 1961, at a gathering in Punta del Este, Uruguay, where representatives of the United States and all Latin American states except Cuba endorsed a charter promoting land and tax reform, democratic governance and economic modernization.

Before long, however, the alliance encountered obstacles. Kennedy had trouble obtaining congressional approval to fully fund the program, and bureaucratic hurdles — both in Washington and around the hemisphere — made progress erratic.

Although the Alliance for Progress did not reach many of its goals and ultimately was dissolved, it produced some measurable achievements. The program “is probably best judged in terms of how it affected individual people across the hemisphere,” said Taffet. The alliance supported the construction of housing, schools, airports, hospitals, clinics and water-purification projects throughout Latin America and distributed free textbooks to students.

Because of alliance funding, “more people in the region could send their kids to better schools, move into better homes and attain a middle-class lifestyle,” Taffet added. “Whether or not the alliance changed regional economies or political situations is hard to say, but individual people did benefit from this initiative.”

If Kennedy was disappointed by the alliance’s limited success, his energetic championing of the program’s goals made a strong impression on people throughout the hemisphere. “To this day, he remains much admired, and there are schools and streets in Latin America that bear his name,” said Taffet. “Kennedy promoted the notion that the United States can be a benevolent partner in the region. We hope to build on that legacy.”

The 21st century, however, has its own unique circumstances. “Today, the world has fundamentally changed: the Cold War is over and many Latin American countries are thriving democracies with robust economies,” said Valenzuela. “While the Obama administration’s policy in Latin America is similarly motivated by our interest in a prosperous and stable continent, we are guided by a new spirit of cooperation and respect for what the region has accomplished.”

“The countries of the Americas are now partners that can work with the U.S. on both a regional and global level to

address common challenges and opportunities together, rather than as a region that looks to U.S. assistance in order to achieve success.”

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